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See Bethge's article re Bonhoeffer papers

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Eberhard Bethge, student, friend, and associate of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writes in this issue of his labor of love in editing and publishing the Bonhoeffer papers, a task to which he has devoted much of his time and energy since the end of the war. During the academic year 1957–58 Mr. Bethge was in residence at the Harvard Divinity School. At present he is pastor of a German congregation in London, England. The editor is responsible for the translation of Mr. Bethge's article into English. Page 1

Professor Ferré contributes another illuminating review of recent books in the field of Christian theology. The review was ready for publication early this year, and the editor regrets the unavoidable delay in making it available to readers of the *Bulletin*. Page 25

A few notes on books in 1959 by Andover Newton authors are appended by the editor to Dr. Ferré's review. Inside back cover

The definitive edition of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was published four hundred years ago, in 1559, and we are happy to include in this issue a short note on the great Protestant Reformer by Dr. John T. McNeill. Onetime Professor of Church History at the University of Chicago and Professor *emeritus* of Church History at Union, Dr. McNeill is now living at East Middlebury, Vermont. Page 32

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The Editing and Publishing of the Bonhoeffer Papers

Eberhard Bethge

I

"When the time comes for you to write my biography . . . ." Dietrich Bonhoeffer said to me jokingly at the beginning of the war. Back of the levity, however, lay a certain grim conviction that sometime the task would become necessary. For Dietrich Bonhoeffer was aware in those years of the way in which he was becoming increasingly involved in a situation that for a German Lutheran was politically and theologically novel, equivocal, and even dangerous. Novel, because the possibility of participation in sabotage, an underground movement, and planned assassination had not previously been raised or considered by Lutheran ethics. Equivocal, because confidential relationships with friends in the ecumenical movement had apparently been betrayed to the German war machine. (The theologian who had written *The Cost of Discipleship* met with them at the behest of the German Intelligence Service.) When Bonhoeffer suddenly appeared in Switzerland in 1941 with all the necessary visas, Karl Barth actually doubted his reliability and believed it conceivable that he had become pro-Nazi. And dangerous, not just because of the threat to his own person, but because the rationale and justification of a calculated risk cannot and may not be demonstrated in advance; one must leave this to the judgment of God and of men, ready it may be to be rejected, and ready also to accept such a rejection.

Although Bonhoeffer had suggested it, I did not believe at the time that the task of interpreting him could actually fall upon me. I believed that his undertaking would be successful. And even when this proved not to be the case, it was only gradually that I became convinced that the fragments of his writings ought to be preserved and made available, and even more gradually that perhaps the contexts and relationships of these fragmentary works deserved also to be recorded. The task of becoming editor and publisher of posthumous documents was thrust upon me without any previous experience in the techniques and requirements of such a responsibility to history. I belonged to the theological generation in Germany in the thirties that thought of engagement in pure science as a cowardly evasion of duties in the battle line. As a matter of fact, German theology in those years suffered seriously from the lack of men well-trained in theological research.

I was confronted with the task because, during the last ten years of his short life, Bonhoeffer and I were in close and friendly association. To begin with I was one of the candidates in the ministers' seminar of the Confessional Church over which Bonhoeffer presided and which by 1935 came to be known (from the

place in which it met) as the "Finkenwalde." Then I served as one of Bonhoeffer's assistants in that work of education until it was finally brought to a close early in 1940. Even thereafter our relationships remained more or less intimate. I observed him as he began his new theological work in the field of ethics, and I was aware of his increasing involvement in the activities of the political underground until that day, April 5, 1943, when a Gestapo automobile stopped in front of the house and we were successful in pretending that no relationship of any consequence existed between us. After six months of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's imprisonment, his parents, his fiancée, and I began regularly to receive those letters, smuggled out of his cell, which have been published in excerpt in *Prisoner For God*.[1] On two occasions while he was in prison I was permitted to visit him and to carry on a conversation, subject only to mild supervision by a guard. All this, however, came to an end on July 20, 1944, with the unhappy failure of the attempt on Hitler's life. When I myself was finally arrested, in October, 1944, I had time only to draw his last letters quickly from my pockets and destroy them. Months later it became my duty as the survivor to attempt a description of the Odyssey that led Dietrich Bonhoeffer through storm and stress to his tragic death. What I had to work with were letters, notes, and handwritten manuscripts that Bonhoeffer's parents and I gathered from his desk and preserved.

At first my only concern with these papers was to recover the scattered drafts of chapters of an *Ethics*,[2] whose composition Bonhoeffer had once considered to be his life's work. He had worked at it with increasing concentration from 1940, interrupted by political journeys and conferences, and had suffered because he was prevented by imprisonment from continuing and completing it.[3] I now attempted to decipher the extant material and to arrange it so far as possible in the order of its origin.

At this juncture, as often in later years, someone from outside Germany who was interested in the ideas that Bonhoeffer had in mind came to my help: the Bishop of Chichester, Dr. G. K. A. Bell. At a secret meeting in Stockholm in 1942, Bonhoeffer had told him of his work. Now Dr. Bell wrote again and again to my bishop in Berlin to inquire whether I was making any progress in the preparation of the Bonhoeffer papers on ethics, and the latter felt himself compelled to give me the necessary free time for the task.

When the *Ethics* finally appeared early in 1949 I believed I had done all there was to be done—and waited anxiously for the echo. The echo when it came was scarcely audible. This may have been due to the fact that at that time in Germany everyone in the universities was still too deeply involved in the most primi-

[1] *Prisoner For God*, Macmillan, 1954.

[2] *Ethics*, Macmillan, 1955.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

tive tasks to begin any scientific discussion. Perhaps it was because Bonhoeffer, the young theologian who had suffered such a singular fate, was still regarded too much as an outsider. Or it may be that the brevity of the *Ethics* and its incomplete and fragmentary character as compared to the earlier *The Cost of Discipleship*[4] made it appear too unsatisfactory to be an object of intensive study. It was only later, when a quite different Bonhoeffer compelled attention in the book *Prisoner For God*, that it received real consideration.

Again matters did not work out in accordance with a plan by which I would have been aware of what rested in my writing desk and have realized in advance that it would impress countless readers and attain creative significance. I possessed the illegal letters written in prison. A number of these had been taken from the tin cans in which what had appeared to us personally to be precious had been buried in the garden by the women. (A few of my letters still show distinct marks of the damp mold that had begun to cause the paper to disintegrate.) Other letters, together with a number of almost illegible notes of or for the interrogations, had come to light because one of the guards who had been loyal to Dietrich Bonhoeffer—his name was Knoblauch—had forwarded his secret mail. Bonhoeffer's mother had preserved these letters in her gas mask canister in the kitchen of her tiny suburban garden house in Berlin-Reinickendorf. Unfortunately much that had been stored in these places was lost, including a whole section of a work on *The Essence of Christianity*,[5] of which an extensive draft had already been completed.

One day I was encouraged by friends to make the theological sketches in these prison letters accessible. The sketches were in genuine letters, and in the perusal of them the reader participates from datum to datum in the development, the resumption, and the rejection of ideas pro and con. I discovered that their sketchy character made it necessary to show that the chapters of the book did not consist of essays on the theme "Christ in a World That Has Come of Age," but of genuine letters. So it was that I came to select and abstract those letters of Bonhoeffer to his parents and to myself that have now been published, tinged as they are with all the emotions, sometimes more and sometimes less rigorously controlled, of a man in a prison cell.

The book did not appear until seven years after the letters had been composed. Nevertheless everybody was soon talking about it. People found it difficult to decide what they found more impressive, the broad learning and humanity of a free man in prison, or the exciting prolegomena to a mature revision of church doctrine. Edition followed upon edition, and soon there were translations also in English, Dutch, and Danish.

[4] *The Cost of Discipleship*, Macmillan, 1949.

[5] *Prisoner For God*, pp. 178–181.

Now questions began to be asked about the author, and attention turned to the earlier writings that had sounded such an apparently different note: *The Cost of Discipleship* (published in 1937), *Life Together* (1939),[6] and the posthumous *Ethics*. I was asked whether there were still earlier works by Bonhoeffer, and particularly whether, in addition to the imprisonment letters that had been published, there might possibly be still others in which Bonhoeffer himself could have indicated how biblical concepts might be interpreted in new and non-religious terms. To the latter question the answer was "No." To be sure, for still another month I had received letters which dealt further with the theme of the secular interpretation of biblical concepts that Bonhoeffer had previously raised. (That is to say, those written during September, 1944. *Prisoner For God* closes with a letter from the end of August, 1944!) But these September letters were the ones I had burned in the fireplace just before my own arrest. At the time I had a feeling of relief at the thought that they could no longer incriminate or bring misfortune on anyone. (No member of the Gestapo ever learned of the extensive and illegal correspondence carried on during the years 1943 and 1944. When each of us was put into Gestapo prisons, which after the attempt on July 20 to assassinate Hitler were so much more effectively guarded, the exchange of letters came, of course, to an abrupt halt!) Today I am afflicted with the tormenting afterthought that I was responsible for the destruction of what may have contained decisive developments of Bonhoeffer's ideas, but developments which I can no longer recall. There is no longer anything from Bonhoeffer, then, that can take us beyond the theological positions of his published letters. All that is open to us is to make a careful reexamination of what we have in order to ascertain whether or not the hints he gives us indicate the right direction we must take in the fulfillment of our tasks.

To the former question, whether there were earlier works of Bonhoeffer, the answer was "Yes." Pressure came from Danish, American, and of course German theologians to make as many of them available as could be recovered. So it came about that Bonhoeffer's dissertation and his inaugural lecture as a professor, after slumbering without attention for twenty-five years, were awakened to a new life and their significance was finally recognized and made the subject of discussion. In 1955 Karl Barth paid the *Sanctorum Communio*[7] a late but emphatic tribute in his *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV, Part 2.[8] And *Act and Being*[9] was discovered

[6] *Life Together*, Harper & Bros., 1954.

[7] First ed., Munich, 1930. Second ed., 1954.

[8] *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Vol. IV, part 2, p. 725. "I openly confess that I am endeavoring at this point to maintain the level that Bonhoeffer then attained, from my vantage point and in my own language to say no less and to speak with no less earnestness than this young man did on that occasion."

[9] First ed., Munich, 1931. Second ed., 1956.

to be a very early but still important anticipation of a fruitful approach to the problems raised by Rudolf Bultmann.

Stimulated by the general interest that arose after the appearance of *Prisoner For God*, a group of Bonhoeffer's former students and friends came together to evaluate his contribution and to discuss their own orientation to it. Two volumes, rather dangerously entitled *A World Come of Age I* and *II*, which presented essays, preliminary reports on problems Bonhoeffer had raised, and a bibliography, issued from their deliberations.[10] The title "A World Come of Age" was a dangerous one because it gave the impression that an optimistic analysis of the present situation stood at the center of Bonhoeffer's thought, while the truth is that a Christology must be the pivot of all Bonhoeffer's liberating analyses.

Interest in Bonhoeffer and curiosity concerning him reached a certain high point when, at the meeting of the German Society For Evangelical Theology at Wuppertal in 1956, Professor Ernst Wolf declared, at the beginning of a session of questions directed to Karl Barth: "While in 1953, at the previous meeting of the Society, questions revolved almost entirely about the person of Bultmann and the problems he had raised, on this occasion Bultmann has almost entirely disappeared, and Bonhoeffer and questions concerning subjects Bonhoeffer dealt with have taken his place." Karl Barth, however, who had been annoyed because his theology had been labeled "revelation-positivism" by Bonhoeffer in the imprisonment letters,[11] simply refused at the time to undertake any interpretation or make any criticism of Bonhoeffer's fragmentary writings. He advised his listeners preferably to give intensive consideration to the earlier Bonhoeffer, the Bonhoeffer of the *Sanctorum Communio* and *The Cost of Discipleship*. (The same advice is given with special emphasis in *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV, Part 2.[12]) He would warn that, if everyone were to undergird his own special point of view with quotations from the later Bonhoeffer, the latter could no longer serve as an authority! Does this warning also deserve to be heeded today when, among young theologians of communistic countries, antagonistic to the West and influenced in their thinking by Hromadka, an intense interest in Bonhoeffer has become apparent? When in such circles the hitherto most extensive and most intensive works on Bonhoeffer have been written (Hanfried Mueller!)?[13] And when in those areas conclusions are drawn that Bonhoeffer may perhaps have suggested but which we consider to be suspicious and

[10] Munich, 1955 and 1956.

[11] *Prisoner For God*, pp. 123, 126, 148 f.

[12] *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Vol. IV, part 2, p. 604.

[13] A comprehensive dissertation by Hanfried Mueller entitled "Dietrich Bonhoeffer on the Relation of the Church to the World. A Contribution to the Theme of the Relation of the Word of God to Society." Not yet in print.

unwarranted? We should orient ourselves in good time to what one day may be thrown from that direction into the theological debate.

A few quotations from an article that appeared in the East Berlin newspaper "Neue Zeit" on December the 3rd and the 12th, 1957, may indicate the direction in which theologians in communist countries are thinking and working. The article is entitled "Past and Future: The Transformation of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's View of History."

> The ideology of the Christian West was reactionary. Bonhoeffer wished to make it serve the future, the liberation from Fascism. [See the chapter "Inheritance and Fall" of the *Ethics*.[14]] The influence of inheritance acted like a double law, which excluded the future. As a consequence, according to Bonhoeffer, Christ in the West had become history; he was no longer the Coming One, but an inherited figure, a figure of the past. In the ideology of the Christian West he was no longer present as the Crucified One. On the contrary, he had become a simple fact, and because of this history had been transformed into a religious law. At the same time, however, and not without relation to these developments, the same inheritance, as an historical bond to a social order of the past, robbed natural man of the freedom to devote himself unreservedly to the future of life on earth, robbed him of the freedom to find the criterion of historical tradition not in the past but in what is yet to come . . . . The liberation from this domination of a Christian past, which Bonhoeffer achieves, is nothing other than a veritable work of reformation. It is both the liberation of faith from the law of a religious philosophy of life, and the liberation of our philosophy of life from the burden laid upon it by religion. Faith, as Bonhoeffer thinks of it, is no longer that which binds one to a Christ who is the unifying factor of the West, but "the fact of being caught up into the messianic sufferings of Jesus Christ."[15] As a consequence the man for whom faith has this meaning, the man who shares God's sufferings in the world, becomes free to see the world as it is, beyond all categories of religion, history, and theology. That is, the believer becomes free to see the world *etsi Deus nun daretur*,[16] as though there were no God; he becomes free to accept an atheistic philosophy of life . . . . There are two things that basically determine the reformatory character of the last thoughts of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In the first place, there is the discovery that Paul's question whether circumcision is a condition of justification means today whether religion is a condition of salvation.[17]

[14] *Ethics*, pp. 25 ff.

[15] *Prisoner For God*, p. 166.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 162.

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 123 f., 149.

In the second place, there is the discovery that the New Testament, unlike all other religions, does not proclaim the mighty God who is counsellor when human wisdom fails, saviour when human power is lacking, but that the gospel is truly the message concerning the Cross, concerning the suffering, impotent God. These discoveries have enormous consequences. Religion is no longer a condition of salvation. That means nothing less than that faith in Jesus Christ does *not* presuppose a religious conviction, a religious consciousness, a religious philosophy of life . . . . Therefore it is evident that from now on an entirely new view of history is both possible and necessary. It will no longer be historical, theological, religious. It will no longer even be intentionally idealistic, for all idealism carries within itself a religious inheritance—even its atheism is religious. It will be a view of history that is rational and optimistic; a view whose atheism is grounded in faith; a view that here and there may be primitively and naively materialistic in its appreciation of the historical laws to which human understanding has to conform, but a view which, at any rate in intention, is highly realistic.

To the extent that these observations are an actual clarification of what Bonhoeffer thought and has to contribute and are not just an undergirding of the writer's own ideas with quotations from Bonhoeffer, it is plain that the whole of his development, his statements, and his actions must be made available. But *must* that really be done? Some think that Bonhoeffer is already to be numbered among those original, classical theologians whose works have marked a new turning-point. Others reject this claim, holding that his thought and action were without direction, undependable, difficult to reduce to a formula, and without any notable contribution to contemporary theology. In order to help students better to evaluate these opinions and to come to a decision concerning them, I have been constrained to undertake the task of assembling all the material that can possibly be recovered.

I am governed in this undertaking by the following considerations: (1) Essays and other works of Bonhoeffer that were published in early years are inaccessible today in most instances and ought again to be made available. (2) A number of Bonhoeffer's writings, sermons, and exegetical studies were never published because of the ban imposed on them by the Nazis. (3) Bonhoeffer carried on an extensive correspondence with churchmen and theologians (as, for example, with Barth), and these letters, as well as parts of his personal correspondence, could be assembled and, because they give a fascinating reflection of the times and their history, ought to be of general interest.

With the publication of this material I hope that a few valuable contributions will be made (1) to recent church history, whose documentation in Germany is difficult and the object today of a

widespread search; (2) to the history of the ecumenical movement in the thirties; (3) to the history of National Socialism and its relationships with the Christian church; (4) to the question of responsible opposition to a tyranny; and (5) to theology, in that here a way is taken independently of Karl Barth, not ignoring him but passing in critical discussion through and beyond his theological positions to a new and earnest consideration of the questions raised by liberal theologians.

With such considerations in mind and in view of the extent of the material, I formulated the plan of publishing the "Collected Writings" in four volumes.[18] In the following section of this essay I shall give a brief discussion of their contents and indicate the problems with which they are concerned.

II

Volume 1. The Ecumenical Movement: Essays, Documents, and Letters. This volume appeared at Christmas, 1957. It contains documents that begin with Bonhoeffer's letters and with his official report of his period of study at Union Theological Seminary in New York and that end with Chichester's accounts of the hazardous meeting in Stockholm at the end of May, 1942. Wherever possible I also included documents or letters that were written, not by Bonhoeffer himself, but by those associated with him, in an effort to give a complete picture of the problems that in those years pressed so heavily upon both the German churchman and the ecumenical movement. We became increasingly aware of the burden of the tragic demands that in the period of Hitler's dominance one part of the church had to impose on the other. The Confessional Church, especially through Dietrich Bonhoeffer as its representative, had to insist that the ecumenical movement could not treat the Confessional Church and the so-called "Reichskirche" (i.e. those who adopted a position of neutrality with respect to Hitler, or the German Christians who had made a pact with him) as partners enjoying equal rights. It had to insist that only one of the two should be invited and that only on this condition could the Confessional Church agree to be represented. Only those who familiarize themselves with the struggle in the German church will be able to appreciate the fact that at the time it had to issue in such an either-or. And a tragic demand was also made of the ecumenical movement. In obedience to its own inner law it had to indicate, although only with the greatest caution, the direction that would lead from a movement to the *una sancta.* As a consequence it did not recognize the validity of the claim of the Confessional Church, although all its sympathies lay with it, and therefore weakened rather than strengthened it at decisive stages in its struggle.

[18] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Gesammelte Schriften* [*Collected Writings*], ed. Eberhard Bethge, Munich, 1958. Vols. I and II have already appeared.

The volume shows that Chichester and Amundsen came the closest to sharing Bonhoeffer's point of view. It shows the loving patience with which Leonard Hodgson, secretary of the Commission on Faith and Order, tried to persuade his partner of the impossibility of his claims—in a tragic way again in 1939, when the signals pointed to the imminence of storm and destruction. How far are we to proceed with responsible caution? How far with venturesome faith? Even when these are exercised with the best of intentions, what do they lack? Questions such as these, raised by research into the history of the ecumenical movement and by its achievement of self-understanding, here are focussed on a living object.

Although the "World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches" was theologically liberal and for this reason did not appeal to Bonhoeffer, the earlier parts of the book make it clear that he preferred it nevertheless to the other ecumenical movements, because he saw in it a greater and more effective concern for the peace that Christ had enjoined than was apparent in "Life and Work" and "Faith and Order."

The central portion of the volume—perhaps personally and spiritually its high point—contains the diary of Bonhoeffer's second visit to the U.S.A., which took place during the summer of 1939. To save him from being conscripted into the army, an order with which he was threatened and which he intended to disobey, Reinhold Niebuhr persuaded Leiper and Cavert of the National Council to bring the German theologian to the United States, and Paul Lehmann wrote to thirty or forty colleges to invite him to lecture. Weighing the human and the spiritual factors involved, Bonhoeffer had actually and seriously considered escaping from the dilemma that faced him in Germany. Almost as soon as he was in New York, however, he was troubled by concern for those who remained behind and for the more severe conflicts that awaited them, and so, after all arrangements had been made, he turned down the suggestions of those who had gone to such pains to help him and returned after four weeks to Germany. The brief entries in the diary—it was his custom in general only very rarely to make diary entries—which he usually wrote after having read the Herrenhut saying for the day, reflect all this most vividly. It was not until after Volume I had been published that I had access to still other documents of these weeks, Paul Lehmann's correspondence with Bonhoeffer and a few documents in the ecumenical archives of Union Theological Seminary. These now appear in Volume II and in this setting furnish links in the chain of events that marked the German church struggle. Probably it will always be the fate of such an anthology to have important material come to light only after the frame in which it belongs has already been hung and exposed to public view. However, we have the consolation of knowing that much material would not

come to light at all if this did not happen. And consequently we willingly put up with such repetitions.

As already mentioned, Bishop Bell gave me permission to publish his two reports on the secret meeting at Stockholm. This was the occasion on which Bonhoeffer and Schoenfeld, acting on behalf of the German resistance movement, again informed the British government of what would happen—Bonhoeffer actually named the conspirators—and requested certain assurances. (These, however, were not forthcoming.) I was especially fortunate to obtain Dr. Bell's permission also to publish his exchange of letters with Anthony Eden on the matter. Because the material for this volume was so scattered and rarely came into my possession in complete form, its preparation for publication took an immense amount of time. The Danish pastor Glenthøj, who published one of the first essays on Bonhoeffer and the ecumenical movement,[19] was of great help to me. In Germany during the Nazi period it had not been possible to preserve any ecumenical material that had acquired a special significance. Geneva, where the central organization of the ecumenical movement was located, ought to have been the best source, but this was not the case. In 1940, when the Swiss feared an imminent invasion by the Germans, all documents that had been written by German members of the opposition or concerned them in any way were destroyed. The destruction was thorough and, while warmly welcomed at the time in Germany, is deeply regretted today by all who have an interest in such matters. A few documents relating to the work of the ecumenical movement in mediating between the Confessional Church, the German resistance movement, and English Christians (W. Paton, W. Temple)[20] that survived were discovered by Visser t'Hooft in his writing desk.

When preparations for the publication of Volume I were already so far advanced that further changes were virtually impossible, I found almost forty other relevant letters in Chichester's gray, old palace. These consisted of correspondence between Bonhoeffer and Bishop Bell at the time when the bishop, as president of the Ecumenical Council for Life and Work, was writing his protests to the bishop of the German Reich and was pleading with Hindenburg, the old president of the Reich, and with the whole ecumenical movement to intervene on behalf of those who were suffering persecution. I was able to include only a few of the most important in Volume I. The rest had to be reserved for Volume II.

Volume II. The Church Struggle and Finkenwalde: Addresses, Resolutions, Essays, and Encyclicals. This volume, which appeared in 1959, is connected very closely with Volume I. It is

[19] Jørgen Glenthøj," Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Ecumene" in *Die Mündige Welt* [*The World That Has Come of Age*], Vol. II, pp. 116–203.

[20] *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. I, pp. 355–371.

concerned once again with events of the thirties, but interest is now concentrated more particularly on developments within the German church. Its collection of encyclicals and documents from Finkenwalde, the ministers' seminar that Bonhoeffer founded after April, 1935, and kept in being by all sorts of illegal devices until 1940, also reflects events of the thirties. (It was at Finkenwalde in 1935 that I first made Bonhoeffer's acquaintance, and it was there that I later became his assistant.)

This volume happens to be published in Germany at a time when the situation is tense. In strangely spooky forms the struggles of the thirties are being re-enacted with the publication of documents and commentaries. Old tensions between survivors of those who had been neutral and those who had been in opposition, the former in the majority and now active again as competent professionals in many influential positions in political and university circles, to our misfortune have neither disappeared nor been reconciled. On the contrary, they have been highly dramatized here and there by the infliction of new and all-too-human injuries. Perhaps this is something that ought to make us ashamed. Perhaps it is something that could not be avoided. And perhaps this passionate mania to justify or condemn will make it possible at some later date to give a truly historical account of the times, for it conjures up more and more documents of the events, with which the one seeks to prove how early he was aware of the true nature of the Nazi regime and the other seeks maliciously to demonstrate how late all, including Martin Niemöller, expected that Hitler would be the agent of political salvation.

Work on this volume had necessarily to be carried on while this situation prevailed, and it is responsible for the attempt to achieve the greatest possible completeness. The detail may seem to the outsider at first to be too comprehensive, but Bonhoeffer's attitudes, intrigues, and protests are always lively. Furthermore, he seems really to have been one of the very few who did not succumb for a moment in 1933 to the nationalistic intoxication.

The first part of the volume, a general examination of the leadership principle, consists of a radio address delivered on the evening *after* Hitler's seizure of power. Many of its statements seem to us today to be conservative, but it does draw attention in unmistakable fashion to the symptoms of the process by which a leader becomes a misleader, a seducer—symptoms that already were clearly apparent. At the very time that heads of the German churches, Lutheran, Reformed, United, and Methodist, were writing letters to churches friendly to them, assuring them that foreign newspapers were giving false reports when they spoke of persecutions (such letters were sent a few days before the first Jewish boycott of April 1, 1933), Bonhoeffer sat with Paul Lehmann in Berlin and considered how non-Germans could be better informed and could lodge more effective protests. Paul Lehmann

undertook, for example, to establish contact in New York with Rabbi Wise, whom Bonhoeffer and he had heard on one occasion in 1931. At the time, also, Bonhoeffer wrote his first essay on the Jewish question. I know of no earlier statement to issue from the church after Hitler's seizure of power. It is clear and forthright, and above all it is concerned, not only with the Arian question within the churches, but also outside—that is, with the duty of Christians to take the part of persecuted non-Christians.

The actual problems of the suicidal church struggle emerged in the autumn of 1933, when German Christians held all key positions and the laborious task of building an opposition was undertaken. The struggle was with men of the church who had formerly been highly respected but who now were serving the enemy. Because it deals with such matters, the publication of the book involves it in the current literary renewal of the warfare. The man in the German Christian church organization who was responsible for German congregations outside Germany during the period of Bonhoeffer's official duty in London (1933–35), whom Bonhoeffer had to oppose in ecclesiastical matters as well as in ecumenical affairs, now occupies again a high office in the church. He rendered valiant service in relieving distress during the post-war period. How can documents out of the past be read and evaluated in a spirit of cool, objective detachment?

The documentation in this volume of the work of the underground and resistance movements during the last years of the war leaves much to be desired. But how could documents of such activities possibly have survived? Only three could be located. In comparison with what actually happened (cf., for example, Dr. Bell's reports in Vol. 1[21]), these are concerned only with peripheral activities. The first is a petition addressed to the army authorities. By appealing to the generals in the interests of maintaining the vital war morale of the soldiers, it seeks to make use of the war situation to relieve the pressure of the Gestapo on members of the Confessional Church. The second is a sketch of measures for a reorganization of the church in case of a successful revolution. (Astonishingly enough, this sketch was preserved on an almost illegible sheet of paper in some corner or other of Bonhoeffer's room.) And the third is a sketch of a pulpit proclamation, extremely moving in its emphasis on repentance and reconciliation, that was to be issued to ministers and congregations after a successful revolution. But what else could have been preserved, when everyone was concerned to destroy all documents as quickly as possible, or only wrote in his notebook harmless figures or words that today mean everything and nothing to the uninitiated? Sometime before Christmas, 1944, when I was being examined by the Gestapo, the examining officer threw a whole bundle of papers in front of me and showed me who had written

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 372 ff.

them: Dietrich Bonhoeffer. They were papers copied from the pile of documents that the Gestapo had assembled in September, 1944 in the steel vault of the Intelligence Service at its Zossen headquarters near Berlin, parts of the collection of documents that General Beck had made for the revolution. Many years later Huppenkothen, the leading interrogator of the German secret service who had sent Bonhoeffer to his death, said in the course of his trial that, on the approach of the American army, he had burned the material that had been used in prosecuting the group to which Bonhoeffer had belonged and had scattered its ashes on an Alpine stream. But what had been put before me were copies. I often ask myself whether all such copies of documents were also completely destroyed. Is it not possible that some day, somewhere, some of them will turn up again?

Some information concerning these last days has been preserved in notes that Bonhoeffer scratched with pencil on tiny bits of paper after or for his interrogations in prison. They have now been deciphered with great difficulty and include, among other things, several sketches of letters directed to the judges who presided at the war trial. They contain bare and outright lies which one can scarcely credit to a minister. Every device is employed, even statements in *The Cost of Discipleship* concerning Romans ch. 13, to show the Nazi judges how loyal and how remote from all underground activity this harmless minister had always been, and even how anxious he had been, on his return from the U.S.A. in the summer of 1939, to serve his country in the war. The fate of whole groups of the underground depended on these pious lies. For Germany's sake not a trace of them was to be betrayed. There is material here for many a dissertation on ethics, but not material that could be published without a commentary! It must be reserved for a later biography. Among these documents there is one, for example, that would belong by itself to the field of ecumenical affairs. It is a simulated letter from Bonhoeffer to his brother-in-law, Hans von Dohnanyi, who served in the German Intelligence Service under Admiral Canaris and who held a protecting hand over Bonhoeffer until the final catastrophe. This simulated letter was composed so that, in case of need, it would be found by the Gestapo and would prove that Admiral Canaris' office had rightly exempted Bonhoeffer from normal war service because he had such good connections with foreigners—connections that were important for the German prosecution of the war. (As a matter of fact, his exemption made it possible for him to participate in the work of the underground.) This letter bears a date in 1940 but was actually written towards the end of 1942, when the first indications of impending danger became apparent, and it contains the names of all his ecumenical friends in England, the U.S.A., the Balkans, and elsewhere. But such a letter as this could not be published without a detailed

commentary, and must be reserved for the later biographical study.

The second part of Volume II is a presentation of material that has a bearing on Bonhoeffer's ministers' seminar at Finkenwalde. The seminar, with its associated "Brotherhood House"—a group of young ministers who lived and worked at Finkenwalde—was suspected of Catholic and monastic tendencies and aroused considerable excitement at the time in Germany. Bonhoeffer himself has described the years he spent in this work *expressis verbis* as the happiest and most satisfying of his life. During this period he wrote his little book *Life Together*. All who have observed the growth of such communities, which are becoming more and more common among Protestants, will be interested in the history of Finkenwalde and will be glad to read, for example, of the discipline of meditation that was developed and practised there.

This second part of Volume II makes a further contribution. It throws light for the first time on another side of the German church struggle that has so far not been documented, the share of the burden of the battle carried by the so-called "Young Brothers," both on their own account and on behalf of the governing committees of the Confessional Church, the "Councils of Brethren." The so-called "intact" Lutheran provincial churches, especially those in Bavaria, Württemberg, and Hannover, did not know the whole problem, for their church leadership had not been overrun and destroyed by the German Christians, as had happened in Berlin in 1933. They could examine and ordain young theologians and induct them into regular parishes. In Berlin and in the united churches in the north, however, after all confessional leadership in the official church organization had been completely eliminated, the entire responsibility for training, examining, ordaining, and especially for inducting men into parishes, often in spite of political interference, devolved upon emergency committees organized in 1934, the Councils of Brethren of the Confessional Church. These Councils had to give hundreds of young theologians spiritual and financial support, keep them true to their mission, and send them out on a completely uncertain professional future. Perhaps more than any other factor, this unavoidable problem of the "Young Brothers" is illustrative of the deep rift that ran at the time throughout the entire Confessional Church between the so-called "intact" church groups and those whose official leadership had been usurped by German Christians. The distress and obedience, the weariness and enthusiasm of this group of young men is strikingly illustrated by Finkenwalde. There Bonhoeffer, more than anyone else, knew how to impart courage for complete commitment and the renunciation of an assured income and legal status. It is thrilling to read how many of these young men went to prison in 1937, and how an even larger number of them died in 1940 and 1941 at the Maginot Line and in the ice of Russia as ordinary

soldiers. (None of them was allowed to become a chaplain!) For what purpose? This volume serves as a memorial to them.

Volume III. Theology and the Christian Community. This volume brings together lectures, essays, opinions, and reviews from the years 1928–1940. Like Volume IV, it is still in preparation. It is concerned in the first instance to give a complete picture of Bonhoeffer's point of departure as a theologian, his espousal as well as his criticism of Karl Barth, as it is apparent in his *Sanctorum Communio* and his *Act and Being.* His *espousal* is particularly passionate in the papers he prepared in 1930 and 1931 in classes at Union Theological Seminary with Lyman, John Baillie, and Niebuhr, ignoring at the time all questions he himself had to ask of Karl Barth. His *criticism* is stressed in his inaugural lecture at Berlin University, in which he pointed out the danger of Barth's transcendental categories and reasserted Luther's *finitum capax infiniti.* Unfortunately Bonhoeffer's lectures at the University of Berlin have not been preserved. They would clearly show the development from the interest of those early years in theoretical theological knowledge to the new question of whether it is possible to proclaim the gospel concretely and with authority. In the course of this development questions concerning Barth's categories of thought fell into the background and their place was taken by others concerning the concreteness of revelation in the word and action of the church. Bonhoeffer, however, did not look for this concreteness in any pseudo-authority of the offices of the church or in its liturgical renewal, but in obedience. So the way was prepared for *The Cost of Discipleship.* "Only the man who cries out on behalf of the Jews," he said at the time, "has the right to sing Gregorian chants."

His lectures at Berlin began in 1931 with a course on "The History of Systematic Theology in the 20th Century," and then proceeded to a series on "The Being of the Church" as the contemporary Body of Christ. Lectures in the winter of 1932–33 consisted of an exegetical and theological study of Genesis 1–3, which was published as *Creation and Fall.*[22] (This book appeared in 1959 in English translation.) The last and climactic lecture series, whose loss is particularly regrettable, was concerned with "Christology." Bonhoeffer had left for London by the winter of 1933–34, but the lectures he had proposed to give were announced as "Faith and Work." This title was an intimation of the series that was given form two years later at the ministers' seminar as *The Cost of Discipleship.*

From five sets of student's notes, some of them very good, I have been able to reconstruct a manuscript of the lectures on "Christology," which I will publish in the appendix to Volume III. Bonhoeffer charged that Holl, whose disciple he still considered

[22] *Schöpfung und Fall* [*Creation and Fall*], Munich, 1933. Third ed., 1955. An English translation was published in London and New York in 1959.

himself to be, had been guilty of a remarkable neglect of Christology, and that his Christology hovered throughout between the old substantial and the new dynamic concepts.

The outline of Bonhoeffer's thought is very interesting. He takes his departure in the first part "from the contemporary Christ" (present in the sermon, in the sacrament, and in the fellowship of the congregation—the last in deliberate elaboration of Luther's *notae ecclesiae*, which recognizes only the first two vehicles). In the second part he deals with the teaching about Christ in the history of dogma, that is, with *critical Christology*. At the end, in the third part, he offers for the first time a *positive Christology*, in which he tries to move with resolute steps away from old substantial concepts and in which we are astonished to hear notes that were to be sounded again more than a decade later at the end of his *Prisoner For God*.

The theological work of young men such as Bonhoeffer was interrupted at this point in Germany in 1933 by the intermezzo of the theology of the church struggle, which left all other matters out of consideration. It was deliberately resumed again in 1944 by one of its most influential representatives. It is exciting to ask the meaning of this. We in Germany have recognized a political danger in the tendency to regard the National Socialist era as an interlude, an intermezzo, and to exclude it in this way from our essence and inheritance. Is there not also an element of danger in thinking of the theology of the church struggle as only an interlude? Dare we regard it as a regrettable but understandable relapse into an easy orthodoxy and thus allow it to be forgotten? The material in this volume, taken together with what precedes it, raises such questions but does not answer them. I quote two passages for comparison, the former from the "Christology" of 1933, and the latter from the *Prisoner For God* of 1944.

The "Christology" of 1933.

> Jesus the man becomes God as the object of faith. This happens just because he is man, and not in spite of his humanity or over and above his humanity. Faith is ignited by Jesus the man. Jesus Christ is God, not because of a divine nature, substance, essence, *ousia*, not in any way that can be determined and described, but by faith. There is no such thing as a divine essence. If Jesus Christ is to be described as God, we cannot speak of this divine essence, of his omnipotence and omniscience, but only of this weak man among sinners, of his cradle and his cross. This divine essence—this omnipotence and omnipresence—simply does not exist. . . . If we speak of Jesus Christ as God, we cannot speak of him as the representative of a divine idea who possesses the properties of omniscience and omnipresence. We can only speak of his weakness, of cradle and cross. . . . But faith is where a man so surrenders himself to this abased God that he bets

his life on him . . . where he abandons every attempt to give visible assurance to faith. . . . The resurrection of Jesus is [likewise] not the revelation of his incognito. . . .

"The Prisoner For God" of 1944.

What is God? In the first place, not a general faith in God's omnipotence and so forth. That is not a genuine experience of God, but merely a part of a prolongated world. Meeting with Jesus Christ. The experience that in this meeting a transformation of all human existence has been effected by the realization that Jesus is only "there for the sake of others." This "being there for the sake of others" that we experience in Jesus is the experience of transcendence! It is only out of this freedom from oneself, out of this "being there for the sake of others" unto death, that omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence arise. Faith is participation in this being of Jesus . . . . Our relationship to God is not a "religious" relationship to a being who is the highest, mightiest, and best we can conceive—that is not a true transcendence. No! Our relationship to God is a new life of being for others by participation in the being of Jesus. The transcendent does not consist of endless, inaccessible tasks, but of the neighbor who at the time is accessible. God in human form! Not in animal forms as something monstrous, chaotic, remote, horrible, as in Oriental religions; also not in conceptual forms of something absolute, metaphysical, infinite, and so forth; and also not the Greek divine-human form of "man in himself"; but "the man on behalf of others!" Therefore the Crucified One.[23]

In his letter of August 3, 1944, Bonhoeffer said of himself, "I think of myself as a 'modern' theologian who still carries within himself the inheritance of liberal theology and is obligated to raise the questions with which it was concerned. There cannot be many of the younger generation who combine both these interests."[24] And so, although the main emphasis of the volume is very different, it is right that it should begin with his exchange of letters with his teachers Reinhold Seeberg and Adolf von Harnack. For the latter in particular he had a great respect, despite real differences in point of view. We learn from the correspondence that Bonhoeffer was the last of Harnack's students to speak to him during his lifetime. And it was Bonhoeffer who spoke on behalf of the students at Harnack's funeral, using words which show an understanding of the greatness and of the legitimate and permanent significance of his teacher that was not in any way distorted by the criticism of him. Harnack's last lines to Bonhoeffer were written on December the 22nd, 1929, and made a bequest that Bonhoeffer never forgot:

[23] *Prisoner For God*, p. 179. [The translation of this paragraph is made directly from the text of the German ed., pp. 259 f.]

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 177. [German ed., p. 257.]

> Our intellectual and spiritual existence is threatened by materialism, business, and sport, and our theological existence in addition by a contempt of scientific theology and by unscientific theologies. Those who hold high the flag of true scientific methodology, who stand by it, must do so all the more confidently. They must build as kings, but also not despise the work of the common laborer. I am certain that you, dear Mr. Bonhoeffer, will always keep this in mind, and I have the greatest confidence in your work and in your progress along the right road . . . .

To be sure, our understanding of the term "scientific theology" has been enlarged and altered in a few dimensions by new knowledge and by hitherto unfamiliar situations.

Volume IV. Expositions and Sermons. Bonhoeffer became increasingly fond of exposition, although not as he had learned its practice under his Old and New Testament instructors at Berlin, under Sellin and Bertholet, Deissmann and Lietzmann. His concern, on the contrary, was with an attentive, reflective listening to a passage of scripture in its different parts and in its entirety. Back of the very pithy sentences of his sermons we can detect clear indications of the impending struggle in the church and then of its actual course. His practice at the beginning was to preach from brief texts of the Bible, but later he tended more and more to base his sermons on the longer passages from the epistles and the gospels that were prescribed by the Lutheran lectionary. He made this decision consciously and deliberately. He was aware of the temptation to discover and to embody his own system of thought in the reading from Scripture, and he wished to minimize this danger as much as possible and to speak only as Scripture spoke to him.

Bonhoeffer's procedure at the Finkenwalde seminar was to choose a passage of Scripture and to lead us for half an hour a day in prayerful meditation on it, without resort to a commentary. Wherever possible the same Scripture passage was used for a whole week. At the beginning we made his task of introducing us to this unfamiliar discipline and of compelling us to participate in it a very difficult one. The Finkenwalde documents in Volume II, as well as his book *Life Together*, help us to discover his purpose in this. And it was in the exposition that emerged from this approach that he had a real interest. It would almost seem as if he distrusted the rigorous philological labor expended on the text of Scripture, but the fact is that he had carefully read every new study of philological exegesis. German theologians had been trained for years in that tradition, but not in the other personal and meditative reading of Scripture.

The volume will include fragments of a work for which Bonhoeffer had a special affection, the beginning of a meditative

exposition of Psalm 119, the longest of all the psalms. Bonhoeffer refused to believe that this was the most tedious of all the psalms. On the contrary, it was his conviction that it could only be really understood after a lifetime of study. Again and again he sat down to expound another stanza. This was particularly true during the early period of the war, when he had to make many of the most important decisions of his life—his return from the U.S., his termination of work with the ministers' seminar, his participation in the activities of the resistance movement. He hoped that the psalm would help him see his way more clearly, and again and again he asked his students whether they could not give him help in mastering it and in discovering its proper division and its inner law. As we read the leaves of the work that have survived, which deal with the first twenty-one verses of the psalm, we are amazed at the concentration that Bonhoeffer was able to give to it in those turbulent weeks. It would almost seem as if he had won a great inner peace after he had decided to participate in the plot against Hitler. This ability to sit down for self-forgetful meditation at the very time he was taking part in a conspiracy was one of his remarkable traits of character.

At the end of Volume IV there is an interpretation of the first three commandments that Bonhoeffer made for a layman, as well as a few expositions of some of the sayings in the Herrenhut collection, which he often took with him. The former was prepared in response to a request that was made of him in prison. He wrote it out at the same time that he was developing in his letters his ideas about a "non-religious" or "secular" interpretation of biblical concepts. We turn to it with intense interest to see whether it furnishes a demonstration of this new or modern exposition, but discover that it does not do so. Bonhoeffer's discussion follows the pattern with which we are already familiar in his earlier writings—perhaps a little more calmly and with a greater undertone of assurance than elsewhere. Does this not prove that Bonhoeffer's questions and demands had nothing to do with a new technique of using a language or with new sequences of words? To the very end he can make use of an ancient vocabulary. His concern is much more to relate language to existential situations. Although Bonhoeffer's concentration is intellectual as well as existential, it brings out the attractive force of his own language. Behind the "secular interpretation of biblical concepts" in a "world that has come of age" there is still substantially the old question he had raised as early as 1931–33: the question concerning the authority of the concrete word of the church. Now he says, "I want to know who Christ actually is for us today."[25] And once again the answer is not to be sought in offices or liturgies or sacraments of the church. It will be found only after decades of repentance and in giving oneself up to the "world."

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

III

If in conclusion I were to try to summarize what had been Bonhoeffer's theme, I would suggest "the concreteness of revelation." He made enquiries of that concreteness throughout the two decades of his work as a teacher and as a man of action, and he himself bore testimony to it. In 1931 he wrote to a friend: "Invisibility as a theological doctrine gets us nowhere. . . . Constantly being thrown back upon the invisible God is senseless. No one can stand it any longer."[26] Concern for the concreteness of revelation lay back of the questions concerning theoretical and theological knowledge that he addressed to the Barth of the twenties and to which reference has already been made. They took on a new insistence when Bonhoeffer in 1931 had to preach and teach on his own account. The ethical components in the concreteness of revelation had to be put into words. Now the question became: How is the concrete word of the church possible? In this connection concreteness of revelation means "with authority." The attempt to reach an answer moved in the direction discussed in *The Cost of Discipleship*, and in doing so took a dangerous turn, although Bonhoeffer did not think of discipleship as a special accomplishment on the part of man, but strictly as the earthly reality of revelation. As still remains to be shown, the question took an interesting turn at this critical point, marked by his work on *Ethics* and by the ideas in his last letters from prison.

Bonhoeffer concerned himself with this theme within a framework of thought determined by Karl Barth. But he always went a step further. The early dialectical theologians, including Bonhoeffer, had asked whether revelation could be understood without removing it from the sphere of God's freedom into that of our control. Bonhoeffer went further and asked: How can revelation be understood so that its very preciousness is preserved by the fact that its tangibility, its self-disclosure, is apparent? While other dialectical theologians thought of the sovereignty of revelation as gloriously manifest in its freedom and its intangibility, Bonhoeffer, quite after Lutheran fashion, thought of it as apparent in its self-disclosure. Bonhoeffer differed from the other dialectical theologians of those years in his emphasis on the *finitum capax infiniti.*

No doubt it is true that Bonhoeffer was walking near the edge of a dangerous theological abyss. No doubt he showed all too little interest in assuring his safety on all sides and at all times. Occasionally he developed the theme of the concreteness of revelation with such energy that his friends observed him with curious mistrust. In 1936, during the period of *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together*, Karl Barth wrote to Bonhoeffer:

> You would not expect me to view what is happening in any other way than frankly and with some concern. . . . Especially among the young men of today in the Confessional

[26] To Rössler, Oct. 18, 1931. *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. I, p. 61.

Church, I see a bigger wave of this sort approaching. [Barth's reference here is to the abandonment of the original Christological and eschatological faith of dialectical theology in favor of some kind of action man himself could take]. . . . It may well be that you are called and fitted to be its spokesman and to give it leadership. . . .[27]

Nevertheless Bonhoeffer did not let himself be deflected from his course. He wrote *The Cost of Discipleship* virtually in theological isolation, but never regretted that he had taken that step. As we shall see, he was later aware that this step could have been followed by others that would lead in a direction quite other than he had in mind. He never forgot that the question concerning the concreteness of revelation is to be asked only of revelation, and must not be transformed into a question concerning what is visible to man. He could even subject the core of his theological thought, the *finitum capax infiniti*, to the most careful scrutiny. As he leafed through Zinzendorf's collection of spiritual songs in the preparation of his lecture to the Berlin Olympiad in 1936—the lecture was entitled "The Inner Life of the Evangelical Church Since the Reformation," but unfortunately has not been preserved—he wrote:

> How musty the background of this piety. . . . Yes, that is man! the pious man! The thought of following the *finitum capax infiniti* makes me shudder! The pure and truthful atmosphere of the Word must surround us. However, we cannot escape our own limitations. But at least we can do away with human eyes![28]

From this point of view let me trace Bonhoeffer's theme once again through the various stages of his work, beginning with a theological sociology of the church, knitting itself critically together in *The Cost of Discipleship*, and coming out into the open in a vigorous way in the letters from prison.

Bonhoeffer began in the *Sanctorum Communio* with a consideration of the church in its sociological form and expression. At the time he was the only one of the dialectical theologians who had such a concern. He reproached Brunner with the charge that in his book *The Divine Imperative* he had completely ignored the question concerning the possibility of the concrete command of the church.[29] Again and again in his many speeches at ecumenical conferences (cf. *Collected Writings, Vol. I*) he demanded that the church concern itself, not with general considerations, but with Christ's concrete commandment of peace.

The question of the authority of such a concrete commandment led to meditations on the Sermon on the Mount. He thought of the synodical resolutions of the Confessional Church as de-

[27] Nov. 14, 1936. *Mündige Welt*, Vol. I, pp. 119 f.

[28] To E. Bethge, July 31, 1936. *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. II, p. 278.

[29] *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. I, pp. 33 f.

cisions made in the church struggle under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and he wrote and spoke with anger whenever the realities of revelation were transformed into possibilities which could be treated in one way or another as neutral. During these war years Bonhoeffer was more fearful that his church might be poisoned and made impotent by contempt for concrete revelation than by the barbarisms of the Nazis.

> The Oxford Movement was naive enough to try to convert Hitler—an absurd misunderstanding of what was happening. It is we who need to be converted, not Hitler. . . . Hitler will not and cannot listen. He is obdurate, and for this reason must compel *us* to listen. This is the true state of affairs. . . .[30]

No doubt there was a danger in this, a danger that not only Barth but also Bonhoeffer himself perceived. Nevertheless the old question concerning the concreteness of revelation persisted, and Bonhoeffer took the first resolute but dangerous steps to bring it out into the open and to prevent it from leading to a new kind of narrow pietism. It would have become just this—as a matter of fact, it did become just this for us for a while and was so interpreted by those who knew only *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together*—if his question had been changed a little to read somewhat after this fashion: How can *I* myself enter into the reality of revelation and remain in it? But that, as I have already suggested, was not the basic question that Bonhoeffer had raised in his *The Cost of Discipleship*. The basic question was one concerning the authority and credibility of the word of revelation. It was not the ancient question: What must I do to live in a state of blessedness? Bonhoeffer recognized that such a misunderstanding could easily arise: "I wrote *The Cost of Discipleship* as the product of this way [of leading something like a holy life]. Although I stand by the book today as I did then, I am clearly aware of its dangers."[31] He stands by "something like a holy life," but warns against making it an end in itself!

The old question, however, did not take this turn—a turn that life in those years would have made very much easier and less risky, for even the National Socialists raised no objections when this or that individual took his own private steps to withdraw from this world. It turned rather in the direction of a conscious "this-worldliness."

This development was not completely new. It was quite in accordance with his theme. Early in 1932 he had said in an address:

> Ever since we worked out the evil device of being religious—yes, even Christian—at the expense of the world, we have been otherworldly. Otherworldliness is a very pleasant

[30] Bonhoeffer to Sutz, Sept. 11, 1934. *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. I, pp. 42 f.

[31] July 21, 1944. *Prisoner For God*, p. 168. [German ed., p. 248].

state to live in. Whenever life begins to become painful and importunate, you can leap into the air and ascend unburdened and unconcerned to the so-called eternal fields. You ignore the present; you despise the world because you are superior to it; although you suffer temporal defeats, there are eternal victories that are very easily won. Otherworldliness makes it an easy matter to give comfort and to preach. An otherworldly church can rest assured that it will have no difficulty in winning all the weak, all who are only too willing to be duped and deceived, all visionaries, all unfaithful sons of the earth. . . .[32]

Because revelation has to do with the real world, the question concerning its concreteness drove Bonhoeffer to write his *Ethics*, a task to which he would gladly have devoted his lifetime. Although it remains a fragment, it shows how rigorously he tried to follow Christ's revelation in "penultimate" matters, with their manifold complications open to every kind of misunderstanding. An Ethics of another sort might, to be sure, describe eternal principles, but not the revelation of the incarnate God. The *Ethics* may seem to the outsider to be very German and very Lutheran, but within German Lutheran circles it represented an entirely new departure. It no longer allows for any static division between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the world lest one of these be abandoned to demons and devils. The delimitation of ethics by concrete space and a concrete time, Bonhoeffer believes, is just what makes it an ethics of revelation in Christ. In this respect he is certainly one representative of the "situation-ethics" that is today under criticism. He did not wish ethics to become an inferior half-brother of philosophical ethics.

The old question led Bonhoeffer finally to assert in the letters from prison that Christianity does not have the character of a religion of redemption:

> Christianity is invariably described as a religion of redemption. Is there not a cardinal flaw in this, which separates Christ from the Old Testament and interprets him in terms of the redemption myths? . . . The Christian hope of resurrection is distinguished from the mythological by the fact that it refers man in an entirely new way, and more explicitly than in the Old Testament, to his life on earth. Unlike those who believe in redemption myths, the Christian has no final way of escape from earthly tasks and difficulties into the eternal world, but like Christ he must drink the cup of this earthly life to its dregs. . . . This world cannot be prematurely abandoned. This is what binds the New Testament to the Old. Redemption myths arise out of peripheral experiences of men. But Christ lays hold of a man at the very center of his life.[33]

[32] *Dein Reich Komme* [*Thy Kingdom Come*], Fürche-Bücherei, No. 146, pp. 5 f.
[33] *Prisoner For God*, pp. 153 f.

Even where Christianity is otherwordly, it is this-wordly in its concern.

So we see that the old question concerning the concreteness of revelation and its authoritative proclamation did not drive Bonhoeffer into the narrow pass where it had threatened to take him at the time he wrote *The Cost of Discipleship*. On the contrary, it drove him, or he drove it, out into the open, where he asks questions concerning the concrete Christ in a "world that has come of age," a "world that has lost its religion." He has left us with this question, and with only a few indications of the direction in which we may discover an answer.

Bonhoeffer's greatness consists in the fact that he was able to keep both extremes of the problem at the focus of attention, the freedom and the self-disclosure of revelation, so that the one could not be forgotten in the consideration of the other. He was able always to think of the one as *involved in* the other: Revelation that always remains God's revelation, and God's revelation that is always apprehended as a concrete revelation upon this earth.

The man who follows the way that Bonhoeffer went in pursuit of an answer to his question, with all its twists and turns, may think on coming to the end that there is still a long way to go. Such a one should not forget what Bonhoeffer says in another connection, associating himself with Kierkegaard in the introduction to *The Cost of Discipleship*, namely, that the sequence of effort and discovery ought not to be overlooked.[34] For this reason he said at a later time, "I stand by what I wrote." Otherwise the freedom that Bonhoeffer's last letters have to give is cheapened and perverted. And we have much to learn as we go beyond the point at which Bonhoeffer left us.

Perhaps there is nothing new at all in Bonhoeffer's question. Many before him and many along with him have asked such questions, some passionately as he did, some cynically. But it is enough, although it happens very rarely, if meeting with a man such as Bonhoeffer or the reading of his writings stimulates a thorough search for an understanding of the revelation to this world. Bonhoeffer knew how to ask questions, was aware of the questions that his time addressed to him, and sealed his answer with the sacrifice of his life. Such a combination may make a study of him a rewarding undertaking.

[34] *Cost of Discipleship*, p. 45.

The Theological Bookshelf

Nels F. S. Ferré

This year again I venture to suggest a few books that have made an impression on me as being of significance for the minister in his work. In the deepest sense, the successful minister is the learning minister, and one way he learns is by the reading of important books.

From Harper and Brothers I am going to mention four: For the philosophically inclined minister, John Macmurray's Gifford Lectures, *The Self as Agent* ($3.75), is one of the most thoughtful volumes to come from the press. The author focuses the interpretation of reality itself around the practical place of the person. He shows how the whole philosophic tradition has been vitiated, distorted, and impoverished by neglect of what is most important in the whole field of knowledge—the self as agent.

Ulrich Simon has written a most unusual book called *Heaven in the Christian Tradition* ($6.00). For a long time now this topic has been neglected. Here, too, we have mostly an historical survey, but one which is rich and meaningful. Ulrich Simon contends, and will contend in a sequel to this volume, that for power and reality in Christian worship and life we must return to the classical Christian transcendence of the God who is more than this world and to the destiny of man, which is more than this life.

Whatever Elton Trueblood writes commands attention. *The Yoke of Christ* ($3.00), is, however, his first volume of sermons. It gives us a whole new approach to Dr. Trueblood. Ministers buy books of sermons anyway. This is a volume which is well worth adding to the sermon library.

Possibly the most fascinating of the books to be given out by Harper and Brothers within the year is the essays in honor of Paul Tillich, called *Religion and Culture* ($7.50), edited by Walter Leibrecht. This is a collection of essays dealing with the topic under consideration by men like Eric Fromm, Karl Jaspers, Reinhold Niebuhr, Karl Barth, Karl Heim, Gabriel Marcel, Rudolf Bultmann, Emil Brunner and others. The authors write on topics which are relevant to religion and culture, but which are diversified enough to make this an unusually rich volume.

These books from Harpers are not necessarily the selection of the four best, but they are four books which I think strike facets of thought that enrich our usual reading.

From the Abingdon Press list I pick four strong choices: The first is *The Diary of Peter Parson*, by W. B. J. Martin ($2.75). For years many of us have followed with fascination "The Diary of Peter Parson" in the *British Weekly*. Now the Abingdon Press, under this title, has made his brilliant, imaginative, relevant reflections generally available. No alert minister should fail to read, to enjoy, and to grow by this volume!

An Analytical Philosophy of Religion by William F. Zuurdeeg ($4.75), is quite a different book from the one just mentioned. When I finally laid down this volume, after long wrestlings with it, I was convinced that it is an exceptionally competent re-orientation of the subject. Dr. Zuurdeeg knows analytical philosophy from within and applies the method constructively to religion. I am sure that his rigid distinction as a whole between convictional language and analytical language has a limited efficacy and needs to be placed within a fuller context of adequacy than this approach to the philosophy of religion. But within that limited efficacy, Dr. Zuurdeeg offers a most challenging, albeit a somewhat dogmatic, valuation of traditional avenues of approach. This volume is for the definitely scholarly minister.

No one can know Dean Walter Muelder of Boston University very long without knowing that he is one of the ablest and most responsible thinkers in the modern, Christian theological world. He combines in himself genuine faith with a realistic understanding of social problems. His new book *Foundations of the Responsible Society* ($6.00), is a comprehensive survey of Christian social ethics. It is to be followed by a theological volume. This volume deals with the practical analysis and organization of the institutions of culture—the family, the civil law, the state, property, the welfare state, agricultural society, responsible management, responsible consumption and responsible world community. Anyone living in this world now needs to read books that deal with the relation of Christianity to society. Here is one book I can recommend.

Christ is central to the Christian faith. The New Testament is the primary source of the knowledge of Christ. In *Christ in The New Testament* ($3.50), Charles M. Laymon has given us a readily available portrayal of the central figure, delineating the rich diversity of the New Testament, and finding Christ to be the central unity of its message. This volume is accessible not only to ministers, but also to the intelligent layman.

From Scribners I also select four: The first of these is John C. Bennett's *Christians and the State* ($4.50). Dean Bennett's book is especially strong in its dealing with the nature of man, the nature of law, Christian democracy, and the relation between church and state. Dean Bennett has proved himself over the years as one of the most thoughtful, balanced, and reliable thinkers in the field. It is therefore good to have a volume from him in the same field as that of Walter Muelder.

Claude Welch has given us *The Reality of the Church* ($3.95). His previous book in this name was one of the ablest studies of the trinity that we have produced. *The Reality of the Church* was written in relation to a small commission by the World Council on Christ and His Church in the Light of the Holy Spirit. In it is found able analysis as to the relation particularly between Christ and the church.

As we know, for many years there has been an increasing effort on the part of the Christian faith to free itself from the presuppositions of an era of scientism, not true science. Science and faith come in conflict particularly in the doctrine of providence. The famous physicist William G. Pollard has here given us a stimulating study on the relation between *Chance and Providence* ($3.50). Possibly the book is stronger in its scientific analysis than in its theological, where God's activity and man's freedom become feeble indeed, but it will help those who apply themselves diligently to the understanding of what Dr. Pollard is trying to show us with regard to the new view of science.

From Scribners comes another volume, *Spirit, Son and Father* ($3.50), this time given by President Van Dusen on the doctrine of the trinity. The book makes available in a general way the broad meaning of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in His relation to the Son and the Father. This book should be read along with other books like that by George Henry of Princeton on the same subject. It is a welcome note to hear a strong sounding of the trinity of experience, rather than the trinity of mere speculative theology, even though this distinction is obviously only partial. Even though this book is only just the beginning, and a book which leaves out great new insights on the nature of the Holy Spirit and the trinity, nevertheless, it is one which is available to ministers and laymen and should not be overlooked.

From the Westminster Press I mention four books also: The first is by David Wesley Soper, *The Spirit Is Willing* ($2.50). Dr. Soper gives us almost a book of evangelism insofar as he describes the creative forward trust of the Holy Spirit beyond individual and collective man. There is in this book exceptional inspiration; therefore I highly recommend it for the busy clergyman faced by the burdens of his office.

The Westminster Press is getting out three books on contemporary theology. One is William Hordern's *The Case For a New Reformation Theology* ($3.50). In this volume, Professor Hordern, of Garrett Biblical Institute advocates what is now vaguely called Neo-Orthodox theology. The strength of this book is its weakness. Dr. Hordern is up to date as to the latest swings in theology, and relates his book to Existentialism and linguistic analysis commendably. The problem with the book, however, is that for being so much of a book on the frontier, it may be soon outdated. There is far more, I think, to Reformation theology than this connection with extreme modernity. Nevertheless it is a book worth reading.

Edward John Carnell, President of the Fuller Theological Seminary, has written the volume on conservative, evangelical or fundamentlist theology, call it what you will. He entitles the book *The Case For Orthodox Theology* ($3.50). The title itself is ambiguous because every theology that calls itself orthodox is not

orthodox and every truly Christian theology aims to be orthodox in the sense of following the straight line of Christian revelation. Dr. Carnell makes as strong a case as almost can be made for the return to a more evangelical theology. This is actually happening, not only because of the Billy Graham crusades and the power of *Christianity Today*, but because of a general return to conservative thinking throughout the world during our age. Obviously there is a tremendous swing back in biblical, historical and theological scholarship towards conservative thinking. Therefore I think Dr. Carnell's volume should be studied and weighed. It comes to us a challenge. The arguments often are rather strained, if not forced; but perhaps they had to be in this situation.

Harold DeWolfe has given us *The Case For Theology From the Liberal Perspective* ($3.50). Anyone who is thoroughly acquainted with Professor DeWolfe would know how very carefully and irenically his volume would be written. Of the three volumes, this is undoubtedly the strongest. Personally, I do not believe, however, that Dr. DeWolfe has struck the basic definition of Liberalism, nor seen its origin and problem, and certainly not its weaknesses. For those within the liberal position this is an exceptionally fair and fine piece of work. Westminster Press is to be commended on this effort both to understand the distinctive positions and to work towards a center of theology that will be fulfilling.

The Westminster Press has also published a modern classic: *Authority in Contemporary Theology*. Its author is Robert Johnson. It certainly is the most significant work on contemporary theology since MacIntosh's *Types of Modern Theology*. Professor Johnson starts with authority in Luther and Calvin and does a superlative job with the nineteenth century theologians before proceeding to his main task.

From the Oxford University Press I recommend Giovanni Miegge's *Christian Affirmations in a Secular Age* ($4.00). Reluctantly I admit that this is the first book I have read by Miegge. But here we have great theology by a vibrant Christian thinker. Often we believe a thinker to be great if he generally agrees with our own position. To be sure, Miegge comes very close to my deepest convictions, but the fundamental reason for my strong recommendation of this book is the fact that Miegge is really wrestling with the problem of the classical Christian transcendence in an age of Existentialist doubt. Aware of our basic problem today theologically, Miegge has done basic thinking on the subject and has come out a strong believer in the God who creates, the God of providence, the God of Incarnation, and the God who will fulfill life beyond death. The great classical Christian themes are affirmed in a masterful fashion in terms of both faith and reason.

From the Association Press come two books, recommending themselves: One is Peter Bertocci's *Religion as Creative Insecurity* ($2.50). Instead of stressing peace of mind as the occasion for the

assurance of the presence of God, Dr. Bertocci points out that this life is insecure precisely in order to make us creative. Dr. Bertocci's analysis has proved exceedingly helpful to a number of people, and this book should be included on any book list for modern ministers.

Another book is John Casteel's *Spiritual Renewal Through Personal Groups* ($3.50). To be sure this is a more practical book, dealing with the how-to-do-it aspect of the ministry to a great extent; but it is written by a man who knows the theological and the devotional worlds and can be of real help to the man who is contending with the actual problems of his church.

The Brethren Press is offering us William M. Beahm's *Studies in Christian Belief* ($3.50). For many years I have known Dr. Beahm as a thorough scholar and exciting teacher at the Bethany Biblical Seminary in Chicago. In a way this is a summary of his life's work. It is devotional and evangelical in spirit, but rich in its analysis of one great Christian theme of theology after the other.

No one can be theologically alive today and not know how important conservative theological scholarship is coming to be. At many points liberalism has proved itself basically mistaken, and we must pay careful heed to evangelical scholars. The best publisher among evangelical scholars by far is Eerdmans. This year I want to recommend particularly the works of G. C. Berkouwer. The selection for this year is *Faith and Perseverance* ($4.00). Few doctrines are more generally neglected than this. In some places in this country the doctrine is made so important that it splits churches wide open. The topic in itself is of utmost importance.

I also call attention to Eerdmans' publication of MacLellan's *The Visible Words of God* ($4.00), an outstanding exposition of the sacramental theology of Peter Martyr which I reviewed last year when it was first published in Britain.

From the Muhlenburg Press I have no special book to recommend, except to say that the book which I reviewed from galleys last year is now available, Gustaf Wingren's *Theology in Conflict* ($3.45). Few discussions on contemporary theology are more pertinent than this. Professor Wingren, of Lund University, is increasingly getting to be a major ecumenical theologian. His discussion of Nygren, Barth and Bultmann is devastating, but he makes his points stick because he knows them and he compares them with the fuller biblical message. More and more books should be translated from this first-rate thinker.

Because of its particular relevance to our own alumni, I mention also a book by the Judson Press, edited by Lynn Leavenworth, *Great Themes in Theology* ($3.00). This volume consists of the study papers prepared for the American Baptist Theological Conferences. There are good things in the book, and it is heartening to see that American Baptists are becoming more sophisticated in their thinking. But one can see how easily some are moved by

culturally conditioned theology. For American Baptists particularly it is important to read this book, while praying and believing that the deeper sources of the biblical faith and of spiritual renewal will be opened up.

From Yale University Press, Errol Harris' *Revelation Through Reason* ($4.50), is of exceptional importance in the field of natural theology, a subject which is coming more and more to the forefront of recent thinking. Professor Harris, a professional philosopher, having his roots mostly in the organismic thinking of Alfred North Whitehead, wrestles with the new analytical philosophy and existentialist thinking, and in the wrestling produces a great deal of important seeing.

From the University of Chicago, I want to mention one book, Thomas Gilby's *The Political Thought of Thomas Aquinas* ($5.00). We Protestants are too unaware of the great Catholic tradition. It has been one of the widest and most balanced influences, even though it has been crowded back for a long time. This volume is a rather full rendering of St. Thomas' impact on political philosophy as well as the environments of thought within which it was produced.

One of America's great preachers is J. Wallace Hamilton. A humble and humanly inconspicuous personality radiates and makes relevant the Christian faith in his preaching. More and more American preachers are coming to discover this dynamic messenger of the Christian faith. It is for this reason that I have included his book from Revells *Who Goes There?* ($2.50).

Now-a-days many people are turning to paperbacks. This year I mention two publishers. Harpers gives us The Torch Club Series, and a most remarkable issue it is. On my shelf, just at the very first glance, are Schleiermacher's *On Religion*, Kierkegaard's *Edifying Discourses*, and Erich Przywara's *An Augustine Synthesis*. Write for the whole list of the Harper's Torch Club Series, including such books as Dodd's *The Authority of the Bible*, Paul Tillich's *The Dynamics of Faith*, Freud, *On Creativity and the Unconscious*, and Gibbon's *The Triumph of Christendom in the Roman Empire*.

The other publisher that has sent me its paperbacks is Association Press. It has two series—its famous world-wide Christian books, among which are J. Robert Nelson's *One Lord, One Church*, H. J. Craus, *The People of God in the Old Testament*, R. B. Y. Scott's *The Psalms as Christian Praise*. Its second, smaller series is The Reflection Books, and it contains such interesting books as C. S. Lewis' *Miracles*, Reinhold Niebuhr's *The World Crisis and American Responsibility*, Wayne Oates' *What Psychology Says About Religion*, and Kerr's *What Divides Protestantism Today*. The World Christian Books are $1.25 each, whereas the Reflection Books are 50 cents each.

In summary of these book suggestions, I want to say that there is certainly no reason now for ministers not reading widely and

well. Activism is upon us, and act our faith we must. But soon our faith will run thin unless it be replenished by depth of spiritual devotion and diligence of theological study. Now that the people are going to church we had better begin to feed them and lead them in such a way that we shall strengthen our churches for the possible evil day when what may be partly a fad will begin to peter out. The wise minister today is the one who takes time to grow deep in his prayer life, wide and wise in his reading, and completely concerned with his people, in other words, to make his spiritual life and his reading relevant and effective.

The publishers are doing an outstanding work these days. May the response to the books they give us be one of profound, not only appreciation, but also appropriation, and the using of them for new hope in the world and for genuineness in the transformation of life.

Some Observations on John Calvin

John T. McNeill

From October 1558 to May 1559 John Calvin was confined to his house, and probably much of the time to his bed, with quartan fever, a form of malaria. On the 2nd of March he wrote to Peter Martyr Vermigli: "My bodily strength, as well as my vigor of mind, has been shattered." During this period, however, he revised fundamentally his extensive Commentary on Isaiah. He also reconstructed the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, adding to its previous bulk about 275,000 Latin words. In the opinion of recent scholars he also in the same winter personally translated this work, which is a good deal larger than the Old Testament, into French. Most of us would be astonished with ourselves if for as many months we should be visited with such "vigor of mind" as Calvin had left after his had been "shattered" by distressing illness.

For 400 years the *Institutio Christianae religionis* has been in circulation, and our own generation has witnessed a revival of interest in its teachings. Yet its character is popularly misconceived and its specific doctrines are often misconstrued. It is not a book of hard logic but of warm persuasive zeal. It is absurd, Calvin tells us, to think of faith as mental assent to ecclesiastically authorized dogmas or interpretations of Scripture. "With the heart man believeth," and faith is "a matter more of the heart than of the head, of the emotions more than of the intellect." It is not a doctrinal assent that anticipates piety; assent itself consists in piety, and faith is never severed from heartfelt piety (*Inst* III. ii. 8). The work does indeed make high demands on the reader's mental powers, but he is stimulated by the emotional eloquence and urgency in which Calvin's truly vast learning is carried along. Even a reader who does not share all of Calvin's convictions is still likely to find his soul stirred and his faith aroused by the ardor of the Reformer. Without this spirit, Calvin's prodigious intellectual performance would have been utterly impossible. For him no effort in fields of learning was too great when scholarship could be made to serve the Church of God. In another work he has a sentence well adapted for a wall motto for the theological student: "Nul ne sera bon ministre de la parolle de Dieu sinon qu'il soit premier escolier" (Sermons on Deuteronomy 5; 23–27; *Opera*, Corpus Reformatorum edition, XXVI. 406).